(a) whether the Government have fixed any criteria to determine the backwardness of the Villages in the country;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) whether Bihar leads in the matter of backwardness of villages in the country; and

(d) the steps being taken by the Government to remove the backwardness of villages in Bihar?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RURAL DEVELOPMENT (SHRI UTTAMBHAI H. PATEL): (a) and (b). There is no definite criteria for determination of the extent of backwardness of villages in the country. Rate of Literacy, level of health services, incidence of poverty, percentage of SC/ST population to total population, percentage of agricultural labourers are however some of the indicators of extent of backwardness.

(c) As per the latest estimates of the Planning Commission, 42.7% of rural population in Bihar is below the poverty line as compared to 33.4% of the entire country. The case of Orissa is even worse where the level of rural poverty is as high as 48.3%. As per data available from 43rd round of NSSO survey on employment unemployment, the incidence of usual principal status unemployment in rural Bihar is 2.40% which is lower than that of the rural areas of Assam, Haryana, Kerala, Tamil Nadu and West Bengal.

As regards the level of other indicators of backwardness of rural areas, though Bihar is backward, it is not at the bottom. Bihar's level of rural literacy is better than that of Jammu & Kashmir, Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan. Bihar has a lower level of infant mortality than Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh, Orissa, Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh.

(d) The funds to State Governments including Bihar are earmarked on the basis of comprehensive criteria which include the total population of the State, incidence of poverty, percentage of SC/ST population to total population, percentage of agricultural productivity.

Government's strategy for rural development focus on eradication of rural poverty, improvement of employment opportunities in rural areas, provision of drinking water facilities and sanitation and creation of other basic amenities in rural areas. For this purpose Anti-poverty Programmes, Area Development Programmes and Minimum Needs Programme (MNP) are being implemented.

[*English*]

Indo-Mauritius Joint Study on Meteorological System

4959. SHRI BALRAJ PASSI: Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) whether India and Mauritius have conducted joint studies on meteorological systems and exchanged information and scientists in various scientific disciplines, if so the details thereof;

(b) whether a bilateral agreement has also been signed in this regard; and

(c) if so, the details of the bilateral agreement?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF PERSONNEL, PUBLIC GRIEVANCES AND PENSIONS (SHRIMATI MARGARET ALVA): (a) Sir, No such joint studies have been conducted, nor have there been any exchanges of scientists in this field. The India Meteorological Department (IMD) exchanges meteorological information with other countries, including Mauritius, as part of the ongoing global data exchange

procedures. The IMD also send advisory messages to Mauritius Meteorological Service whenever there is a cyclonic storm in the vicinity of Mauritius.

(b) An Agreement on Co-operation in the field of Science and Technology between India and Mauritius was signed in New Delhi in January, 1990.

(c) The bilateral Science and Technology Agreement provides for cooperation inter-alia in the fields of agriculture, oceanography, atmospheric sciences, medical research, building research, environment and renewable energy on the basis of equality and mutual benefit. Such cooperation will be effected through visits of scientists, bilateral seminars, identification of scientific and technical problems of common interest and formulation and implementation of joint research programmes.

The agreement is valid for a period of five years and shall be automatically extended for further periods of five years at a time, unless either party gives notice to the other party of its intention to terminate this agreement 12 months before the expiry of the said period.

[*Translation*]

Implementation of Reservation Policy for SCs/STs in Various Departments

4960. SHRI MRUTYUNJAYA NAYAK: Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state the names of such departments where the reservation policy for scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes is not implemented and the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF PERSONNEL, PUBLIC GRIEVANCES AND PENSIONS (SHRIMATI MARGARET ALVA): This Ministry is not aware of any Ministry Department where the Policy of Reservation is not being implemented.

[*English*]

Black Marketing of Butter

4961. SHRI GURUDAS KAMAT: Will the Minister of FOOD be pleased to state:

(a) whether butter in Delhi is out of stock;

(b) if so, the reasons thereof;

(c) whether the butter is being sold in black market at much higher rates; and

(d) if so, the steps taken to prevent the black marketing of butter?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF FOOD (SHRI TARUN GOGOI): (a) to (d). The information is being collected and will be laid on the Table of the House.

Price of Newsprint

4962. SHRI CHITTA BASU: Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Government are aware that four Public Sector Paper Mills have increased their price of newsprint recently;

(b) if so, the impact thereof on the newspaper industry;

(c) whether the Indian Newspaper Society have recently represented to the Government for immediate reduction of prices; and

(d) if so, the reaction of the Government thereto?